Mr. Howard Bray
Fund for Investigative Journalism
1346 Connecticut Ave., NW 10th floor
Wash., D.C. 20036

1/22/77

Dear Howard,

Your call, your continuing interest and your valuable, practical suggestion mean much. Thanks for all and for just being a good guy.

There are some unrealities in Curtis'/ letter. His and Zebra's are enclosed.

If I ignore them in my letter part of the reason I wrote it is awareness of them. There is also the possibility he may hear of a publisher with a subject interest. There also are real problems that cannot be avoided. Perhaps this letter, which raises them, can do what you had in mind.

Rather than reducing their output of assassination books publishers are increasing them. All the crap is being reprinted, too.

What troubles me more is his comment on the work. This is neither ego nor vanity. If I did not send you a copy of what I wrote him anticipating precisely this reaction I can. The prevalent dislike of the polemical is acknowledged and an effort made to explain it. But there is no question but that I said it would all be edited out and that in almost all cases i required only a blue pencil. This is not a real problem.

What surprises me is that there is no other criticism of the writing. I had anticipated heavy cuts and agreed to that in advance, too. I asked only that the changes be faithful to the work.

Bantam misbehaved very badly at the evidentiary hearing. I could not honestly leave it out of the draft of a manuscript that is to be inclusive and is expected to be shortened. In fact I organized that part to make cutting it out even easier. But I suspect that even with it out entirely hardback publishers will anticipate Bantam's displeasure and prefer to avoid it.

What is most troubling is that he writes me what he knows is not really true: "you really don't suggest the alternate scenario - - you don't really solve the crime."

As it relates to the incomplete draft this is true. In the reality of which he was fully informed it is false. I went into this in a number of ways, including what Zebra would want. My estimate there was on the point. It had to prepare him and I did, in more than enough detail. The shortens into I knew everything except the names and did establish how the crime was commited., not as alleged. I offered to go to New York, to make explanations, to show proofs and I said what I think has to be obvious in a book about a breaking story, I would not write the missing parts until I had a contract. A month thereafter I promised the rest of the draft. I even went into what would happen to another fake book like Zebra's Appointment in Dallas, what they mix obviously want. What I am saying is that here he is dishonest and I cannot avoid the belief it is deliberate. I have no idea why.

I do not believe it is often that half of a book is described as "a brilliant job" - against the FBI yet - and with simple editing "a very saleable property" and then there is no interest. Especially with the guarantee that the book does solve the crime and with truly unprecedented backstopping, as you will see. Too many of these people cannot face their pasts with me - how else can they justify themselves? - and there remains a gut fear of both government and solid exposure of it. (I had about 120 rejections internationally on Whitewash, the first book.)

My thinking is as simple as my hopes are modest. There is no book that someone can t fault, justly. There is virtually no successful book without a major effort by a publisher. This effort begins with editing. I agreed in advance to the changes mentioned. These claims are therefore not the real reason(s). Whatever is the explanation it is not that the book is impossible or the market does not exist. The market potential is great. Thanks and best,